

# The Z Document: 'Mr. X' in Our Time

By William Safire

WASHINGTON  
**T**he cold war is over; the free world won and the evil empire lost; let's pick a date for V-C Day and celebrate the history-ending victory over Communism." So say our triumphalists.

"The cold war is over; it was largely our uptight right-wingers' fault to begin with because the Russians were never coming." So say our sore winners.

Gorbophiles and Gorbophobes are on all fours in the same mindset: it's

## ESSAY

all over but the happy distribution of the peace dividend.

A ragtag band, taking exception to this consensus, is derided by both sides as unreconstructed cold warriors, skunks at the garden party of the nifty 90's. From Moscow, Brezhnevite retreads accuse us of howling because we were deprived, cold turkey, of our beloved Communist enemy.

We dissenters from the widespread wow-ee worldview have been reduced to Yogi Berra geopolitics — "the cold war ain't over till it's over." We mutter that Mr. Gorbachev is motivated only by the threat of incipient collapse, not by an interest in abandoning iron control. We warn that as soon as the West ameliorates the economic pain, the necessity for glasnost and free enterprise will lessen and the totalitarian system will survive.

Now, in the nick of time, comes substantial intellectual underpinning for the don't-save-Communism gang.

The American Academy of Arts and Sciences is based in Cambridge, Mass., not exactly a reactionary redoubt. The Academy publishes a quarterly, *Daedalus*, named after the Athenian who built an ingenious labyrinth.

Next week, an article will appear in that review titled "To the Stalin Mausoleum" (a play on Edmund Wilson's "To the Finland Station," about Lenin) and signed by "Z," a pseudonym recalling the "X" used by George Kennan a lifetime ago in suggesting a policy of containment.

Z surveys the 70 years leading to the political graveyard in a way that illuminates this past decade's events. Awareness of looming disaster began in Yuri Andropov's K.G.B.; the Novosibirsk Report by the sociologist Tatyana Zaslavskaya in 1983 "im-

plied the necessity of radical restructuring for sheer survival"; its leaking (touted in this space) "first alerted the world to the impending end of Soviet stability."

Gorbachev was "Andropov redux," and at first tried to revitalize the Communist Party; when that failed, he built a parallel apparat — "reminiscent, *mutatis mutandis*, of the way Stalin had used the N.K.V.D. against the mainline Party."

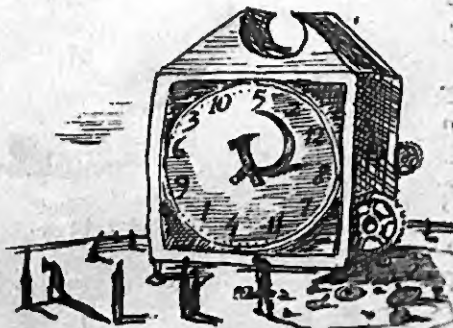
Recent elections, held to insure Gorbachev against Khrushchev's fate of removal by the Central Committee, had an unintended result: "to produce a resounding defeat not just for the apparat, as Gorbachev wished, but for the Party as an institution. ... the Party, which had hitherto inspired fear in the people, suddenly came to fear the population. ..."

But the people's interests are not being served by the Communist Party or Gorbachev's parallel Sovietist apparat; private cooperatives were corrupted by the local political mafias, and decentralization was subverted because it threatened the party's monopoly of power. Result: "Gorbachev is left with the worst of two possible worlds: an old one that refused to die and a new one without the strength to be born."

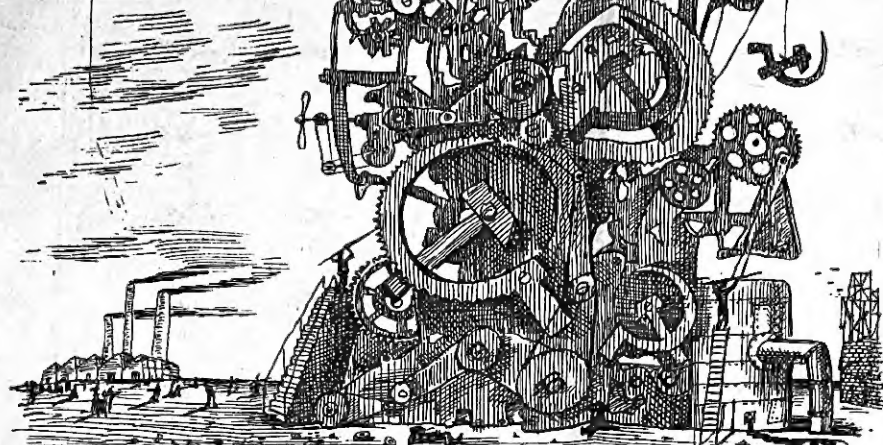
Excerpts from the conclusion of Z's analysis are printed on this Op-Ed page. If they pique your interest, glom on to the magazine or insert yourself into the samizdat of faxes and photocopies that will follow the publication of the seminal article.

Gorbachev, trying to be both Luther and the Pope, cannot fix the stultifying system without going much further than he says he is willing or able to go. But, warns Z (an ideological soulmate whose identity I have no need to know), "decaying superpowers do not go quietly into the night."

In the historical epoch aborning, don't join the crowd expecting serenity or preaching stability. And don't start spending that peace dividend; as Tocqueville observed in Z's keynote, "The most dangerous time for a bad government is when it starts to reform itself." □



# The Soviets' Terminal Crisis



Illustrations by Eugene Mikhasev

The following article is adapted from the conclusion of a longer historical analysis to be published under the pseudonym "Z" in the winter issue of *Daedalus*, journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. *Daedalus* is withholding the author's name from all parties at the author's request. (Although it is not *The New York Times's* usual practice to withhold an author's identity, it is honoring *Daedalus's* commitment.)

By "Z"

It is clear that 1989 will enter history as the beginning of Communism's terminal crisis, and not just in Russia but from the Baltic to the China Sea, and from Berlin to Beijing.

It is also clear that perestroika and glasnost, welcome in their intention, have in their application only aggravated the systemic crisis they were intended to alleviate. They have done so because, like all forms of soft Communism, they go against the logic of the system they are trying to save.

Mikhail Gorbachev has been trying to promote soft Communism through structures and a population programmed for hard Communism. But the latter is the only variety of Sovietism that is the genuine article, for the essence of all varieties of Sovietism is party supremacy. Thus, the instrument of Mr. Gorbachev's reform—the party—is the basic cause of Sovietism's troubles.

The way out of this contradiction? As one Soviet reformer put it after the June Congress: "The country now stands at a crossroads. From here we either go the Chinese way or the Polish-Hungarian way." Although he obviously wished for the latter course, the alternative he posed may well be a Hobson's choice.

The Chinese, say since June 1989 means relative, though now declining, market prosperity under a regime of political and military repression. Repression is certainly a possibility in Russia, but market prosperity is out of the question for the indefinite future. Conversely, the Polish-Hungarian way means genuine democracy, but in the midst of economic ruin so severe as to threaten the survival of the new constitutional order.

In Russia, the economic ruin is even worse than in Poland and Hungary, but real democracy, as opposed to mere democratization, is not even on the agenda. Thus, the Russian way could well combine the worst of the Chinese and the Central European scenarios: economic failure in conjunction with an inexpensive leading role for the party.

Indeed, all paths of Communist reform seem to end in one or another type of impasse. Leninist regimes, when they enter their final decline, seem able only either to implode, as in Poland, Hungary, East Germany, Czechoslovakia and Rumania, or to dig in their heels militarily to stave off implosion, as under Deng Xiaoping in 1989. And this grim impasse at the end of utopia in power is the outcome of the structures that power built. The whole impossible enterprise of Lenin and Stalin was sustainable only as long as the human and material resources on which the system fed retained the vitality to endure the burden of the regime, and as long as some modicum of material success undergirded the party's monopolistic position.

When these conditions ceased to hold, beginning with Deng Xiaoping's marketization of 1979 and solidarity's revolt of 1980, the Communist parties' will to power began to flag and their people's habit of fear began to fade. For the Soviet party-state's survival, this development soon made necessary the expedients of perestroika and glasnost. But these are only pale substitutes for the market and democracy, halfway measures designed to square the circle of making the vivifying force of a resurrected

civil society compatible with the party's leading role.

But this circle cannot be squared. If marketization and privatization are the economic goals of reform, then party planning becomes superfluous, indeed downright parasitical. If multiple parties, elections and the rule of law are the political goals of reform, then the dual administration of the party-state becomes superfluous, indeed positively noxious.

There is no third way between Leninism and the market, between Bolshevism and constitutional government. Marketization and democratization lead to the revival of civil society, and such a society requires the rule of law. But civil society under the rule of law is incompatible with the preservation of the lawless leading role of the party.

At some point, therefore, the line will be reached where reform crosses over into the liquidation of the leading role and all the structures it has created. Russia and Central Europe are reaching that critical line. The false problem of how to restructure Leninism is now giving way to the real problem of how to dismantle the system, how to effect at last an exit from Communism. Perestroika is not a solution but a transition to this exit. As Mitovan Djilas foresaw early in perestroika, Communism is not reforming itself—it is disintegrating.

So, as we rub our eyes in astonishment at the most stunning Communist implosion of all, the collapse of the Berlin wall, we should not conclude that the structures it shielded for so long can be transformed by a few reform decrees. The revolutionary rapidity of events in 1989 should not breed the illusion that the exit from Communism these events presage will itself be rapid.

And the most difficult case of all will be the Soviet Union. Russia, after all, has had 70, not 45 years of Sovietism. Also, the Soviet party is a national institution, not an alien imperialist, with deep roots in the patriotic success of World War II. Finally, this national-imperial party has the military apparatus of a superpower.

Can Mr. Gorbachev succeed? Should we help him? To answer these questions meaningfully, we must first rephrase them. Succeed at what? Help him to do what?

If by perestroika's success we mean producing a Communist system that is economically effective and politically democratic, then the answer must be no. The fundamental structures of the Leninist system reached an inextricable impasse at the end of the 1970's, and the mounting contradictions of perestroika indicate that the system cannot be restructured or reformed, but can only either stagnate or be dismantled and replaced by market institutions over a long period of time.

In this case, any aid the West might render to the Soviet state to save or improve the existing system would be futile. On this score, Mr. Gorbachev is beyond our help. Such aid would also work against the real interests of the restive Soviet peoples and thus of international stability. Like Western

credits to Poland in the 1970's, aid to the Soviet Government would only prolong the agony.

Yes, if by perestroika's success we mean effecting a transition from a party-state and a command economy to democracy and the market, then the answer, unfortunately, must still be no. First, such a transition is not the aim of perestroika; its aim, rather, is to salvage what can be saved of the system by halfway-house concessions to economic and human reality.

Second, and even more important, such a transition would bring the end of the cardinal leading role and hence would amount to the self-liquidation of Communism, something Mr. Gorbachev clearly does not intend to do. Still, events are pressing toward the eventual dwindling away of the system, whatever the Soviet leadership's intentions—and whatever that leader might be in the future. And here Western help could play a constructive role.

First, reducing the mutual burden of armaments, if carried out with due attention to legitimate security concerns, would ease the severity of the Soviet crisis (though it would not alter its structural causes). And Mr. Gorbachev has clearly indicated his willingness to engage in arms reductions, while taking care that the Soviet Union's international retreat does not turn into a rout.

Second, although Western aid should not go to shorting Soviet economic institutions in the state sector, it could be usefully applied to the piecemeal development of parallel structures in a private sector operating on market principles so as to promote economic and, eventually, political pluralism. This could take the form, say, of free economic zones operating under international Monetary Fund conditions in such places as the Baltic states, Armenia or the Soviet Far East. In this case, the expectation would be that such a parallel sector, perhaps with its own convertible currency, would eventually spread across the Soviet Union.

Such a policy is, indeed, a modest approximation of the approach that the Government is now inaugurating in Poland. But what Mr. Gorbachev is prepared to accept for his outer empire in Central Europe (where he effectively lost control sometime in 1988) would be much more difficult for him to accept for the inner empire of the Soviet Union itself, since foreign investment would imperil national sovereignty.

So Western investment, in joint or other enterprises in Russia, would have to be handled without triumphalism about capitalism's superiority, and with due sensitivity to Soviet national pride. The West's aim should be to encourage the change of Soviet realities while leaving the old labels intact—in a kind of socialist-emperor-of-Japan arrangement.

Yet, however the Soviet Union edges toward its partial exit from Communism, this uncharted process can only be long and painful. Nor will it be a unilinear or an incremental progress toward integration in some "common European home." Instead, further crises will most likely be necessary to produce further, and more radical, reforms. And a last-ditch attempt to stave off ruin by curtailing destabilizing reform altogether could lead to that military reaction so feared by Moscow liberals.

And—who knows—in this scenario Mr. Gorbachev might be agile enough to become his own successor, or if perestroika ends in another 18th of Brumaire, to be his own Bonaparte. Mr. Gorbachev would be hard to replace, because his international reputation is now the Soviet Union's chief capital asset; yet, he could not afford to be a very tough Bonaparte, since he has become the prisoner of his foreign policy successes.

Obviously, none of these prospects is a cheering one, and none would be

easy for the West to live alongside. But it is better to look realistically at the genuine options in the East as they have been molded by 70 years of failed utopia than to engage in fantasies about Mr. Gorbachev as a demagogue of instant democracy or about the end of conflict in history. Nor should we forget that Communism, though a disaster in almost every creative domain, has always been supremely successful at one thing: resourcefulness and tenacity in holding onto its monopoly of power.

The Soviet world's transition to normality will be a long time coming. The party, though now dyed with the hues of glasnost and democratization, will cling to the bitter end, like some poisoned nodule of Nessus, around the bodies of nations it has enfolded in its embrace for so many decades. □

## Capital for

When some large U.S. corporate facility abroad that starts producing trucks or computers or other products, the operation creates wealth for our country's know-how and technology advantages to be shared. Besides, when U.S. firms bring marketing, and services to customers, they compete effectively because they respond to local markets. What ask: Why should Americans when foreign companies and to set up here?

During the 19th and the early 20th century, huge flows of money entered the United States. A sorbed millions upon millions this money from overseas helped roads and settle the West. The such investment did the slight American ideal. Since those Europe and much of Asia have: ous devastating wars—and flood capital have ventured abroad bund industries and economy on earth has more investment the United States.

Some of this investment money looking merely for a good than a voice in management called portfolio investment from direct investment (by a domestic company or property rolled by a foreign investor). (foreign investment on earth—Conference Board to be won the end of 1987—the U.S. had share, over 33 percent. The

